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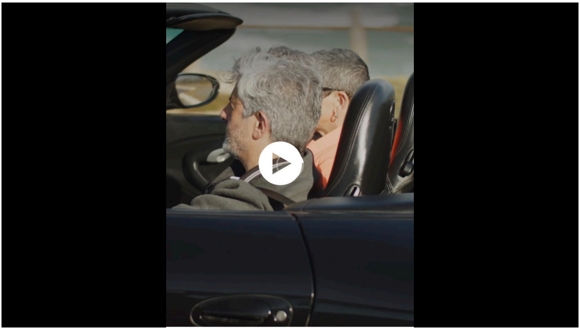
FRAZER NASH

1954 Frazer Nash Le Mans Coupe

SEAN SMITH

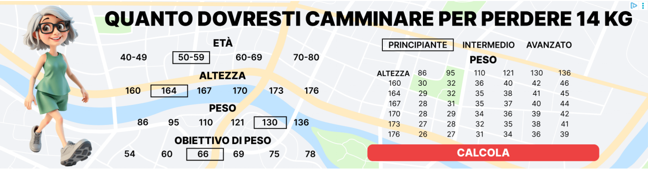
Archibald Frazer-Nash started his company in 1922, but found himself in receivership by 1927. From the ashes was born AFN limited, the majority of which was purchased by H.J. Aldington. In the aftermath, Archibald went on to create a new company with E. Grattan Thompson (Nash&Thompson), which developed hydraulic aircraft gun turrets.

By 1934, the early Frazer Nash “chain drive” cars were a thing of the past, so AFN Ltd. became importers and assemblers of BMWs and sold them as Frazer Nash BMW. They were the official importer until the war got in the way in 1939. After the war, strong ties with BMW kept AFN in good stead. What was left of the heavily damaged BMW plant that wasn’t removed by troops found its way to AFN’s Islworth Falcon works. The Bristol Aeroplane Company, which wanted to be part of the post-war auto industry, bought a controlling interest in AFN. The plan was to build cars using a Bristol version of the pre-war BMW engine. The touring cars would be Bristols, and the Frazer Nash name would be kept for the sports cars. In the end, there was a great deal of friction between the companies, so both companies ended up going their separate ways. Yet despite the split, Bristol agreed to supply AFN with its engines and transmissions.



The first car after WWII with the Frazer Nash name still had a great deal in common with the pre-war 328 BMW, including its designer, Fritz Fielder. Fielder came up with a tubeframe chassis, using suspension from both the 328 and 326. Frazer Nash was in the thick of things in post-war racing, Their cycle-fender entry took “Aldy” Aldington and Norman Culpan to a 3rd overall in the 24 Hours of Le Mans. This variant of car was soon known as the “Le Mans replica.” The envelope-bodied car came to be known as the “Mille Miglia” after its success in the famed Italian 1000-mile race. The two styles of Frazer Nash continued to show well at Le Mans over the years. However, the 1953 season brought rule changes that outlawed cycle-fendered cars, as well as new restrictions on windscreen heights. Frazer Nash answered with the “Le Mans Coupe.” The prototype was a modified, envelope-bodied car with a hardtop and larger grill for better cooling. The new car took 13th overall and won the two-liter class outright that year.

The 1959 season was the final year at Le Sarthe for Frazer Nash. A well-used coupe was brought back to life to run again in the 24 Hours, but an off-track excursion damaged the car enough that its race was over in the event's early hours. The Le Mans coupes are very rare machines indeed, with a total of only nine being built, and three of the flock actually running in the famed race.



QUANTO DOVRESTI CAMMINARE PER PERDERE 14 KG

ETÀ
40-49 [✓ 50-59] 60-69 70-80

ALTEZZA
160 [✓ 164] 167 170 173 176

PESO
86 95 110 121 [✓ 130] 136

OBIETTIVO DI PESO
54 60 [✓ 66] 69 75 78

[✓ PRINCIPIANTE] INTERMEDIO AVANZATO

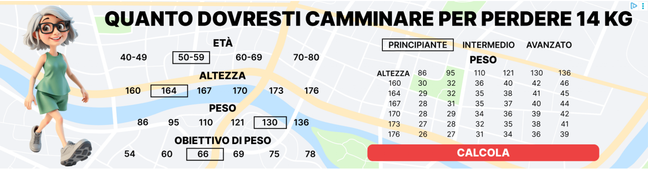
PESO

ALTEZZA	86	95	110	121	130	136
160	30	32	36	40	42	46
164	29	32	35	38	41	45
167	28	31	35	37	40	44
170	28	29	34	36	39	42
173	27	28	32	35	38	41
176	26	27	31	34	36	39

CALCOLA

Josephus "Jo" Conn Guild Jr. was a businessman from Chattanooga, Tennessee, with a love of handmade sports cars. He paid a visit to AFN's Falcon works and ordered up a Le Mans coupe of his very own. Being a somewhat oversized individual, he asked that the roof be raised an inch; for better headroom and (as the car was emigrating to the U.S.) the steering wheel was moved to the left side—the only Frazer Nash ever to be built in this configuration. This was to be a road car, but Conn went for the power and requested the 140-hp BS4 engine. Conn received the car in May of 1954. In 1958, after building only 13 more cars, AFN ceased to be an automobile manufacturer.

Not a young man, Conn only kept the car a short time, using it on the roads around his home, before passing it on to his friend J. Frank Harrison. Harrison entered the Frazer Nash in SCCA events in the 1960s for top lady racer Smokey Drolet. Harrison then passed the car on to one of his employees, Mack Williams. The car disappeared for a number of years, finally resurfacing in a "For Sale" ad in the back of a 1966 Road & Track.



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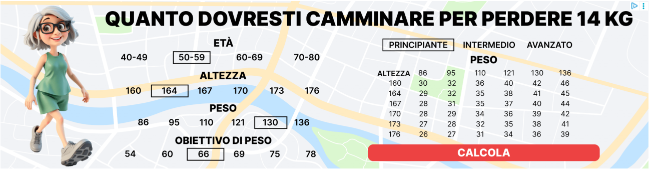
CALCOLA

In 1972, vintage racer Gary Ford was in search of a Frazer Nash. Remembering the old advertisement, he searched his back copies of R&T and found the ad. He was in luck: against the odds, the car had never sold. Ford brought the machine home, very much the worse for wear, and performed a total restoration. For many years, Ford and the Frazer Nash were regulars in Vintage Sports Car Club of America events, until a serious shunt at Lime Rock Park put the car out of commission.



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CALCOLA

Soon after, with a trade for an Offenhauser Indy roadster, the Frazer Nash found its way into the capable hands of Sandy Sadler. Sadler took care of the racing damage and put the car back on the road, running it in the 1999 Colorado Grand. Sadler, a dyed-in-the-wool 356 Porsche guy, found the Le Mans coupe a bit “truckish” for his tastes. The next owner was a bit more in tune with the car’s pre-war personality.

All this aside, on the road, the Frazer Nash is a very well-balanced machine. The steering is neutral with good directional stability, a real compliment to the early rack and pinion steering. You have to work hard to make it go fast, but it is still very much a driver’s car. The slab dash holds a full compliment of Smiths gauges, with a simple three-spoke steering wheel growing out from between the tach and the speedo. The short throw gearbox, even for its age, is a pleasure to use, and the leather seats will keep you comfortable for many a mile. You certainly won't be burning up roads with the coupe, but as a companion on a long distance rally, you are in excellent company. This car will keep the Frazer Nash name alive for many years to come. Many thanks to Frank Allocca for letting me experience this special machine.

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AIRZONE

Specifications

Length 156-inches

Wheel base: 96-inches

Track front: 50-inches

Track rear 52-inches

Height 52-inches (This one only)

Weight 1980 pounds

Engine Straight 6 overhead valve, 2 per cylinder

Size 1971-cc

Bore 66-mm

Stroke 96-mm

Horsepower 140 @ 5750 rpm

Torque 1137 lb-ft @ 3750 rpm

Transmission 4 speed

Compression 9 to 1

Fuel System Triple Solex downdraft carburetors 32BI

Performance

Top speed 121 mph

0-60 mph 8.8 seconds

Average Fuel Consumption 24.5 mpg

Valuation

Excellent $955,000

Good $775,000

Average $600,000

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